

Film-Interview:
David Shentow
Prisoner of the Nazi
Holocaust. Number 72585



Photo: David Shentow
by Florence Kall

**Film-Interview: David Shentow, Prisoner of the Nazi Holocaust,
Number 72585**

Folder Cover:

Tribute Photo of David Shentow, by Floralove Katz

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Scene Selection 1:Film-Interview: David Shentow

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Scene Selection 3:Interview - Part 1: David Shentow
(Interview begun on 5 November, 2006)

Scene Selection 4:Birth (29 April, 1925) - Childhood: Poland (Warsaw) to Belgium (Antwerp)

Q: So, I'm with David Shentow: it's November 5th, 2006, the start of "Holocaust (Education) Week" ... You were born in Warsaw?

Q: Why (did your family move to) Belgium?

Q: And did he (your father) speak Polish? and French to be in Belgium?

Q: You had an uncle in Montreal and one in New York City at that time?

Q: So now, you're six weeks old ... in Antwerp ... and there were plans originally, to go to one of these uncles ... in Montreal or New York ... but that never happened. . .

Q: Now tell me ... you were six weeks old when you moved ... but what do you remember about being a six-year-old? a ten-year old?

Q: Now when was it ... how old were you when your father decided time was up ... that it was time to think about getting out of Europe?

Q: In something that I read that you wrote after you attended a "March of the Living" (testimony), you said that "things were "normal until 1941?"

Q: Now I find this ironic: you were born in Warsaw. . .

Q: So it was October 1940 (in Poland) ... when they started gathering people ... there was an irony there ... because you must have felt, "weren't we lucky that we had moved?"

Scene Selection 5:Growing Threats Against Jews: from childhood to horrors: growing threats, abrogation of civil liberties; removal from family (5 August, 1942) . . .deportations . .

Q: When you were then 15 or 16 then, at this time. . .

Q: Let's take a step back. When did you start wearing the yellow star (Star of David)?

Q: When you say that they didn't bother you personally, let's take a step back on that. . because you did mention that the Yellow Star bothered you, because you used to hide it. . .

Q: Was it a shame, or what was it?

Q: Do you remember the day the Gestapo arrived at your house?

Scene Selection 6:Deportation: from Belgium (Antwerp) to France (Nazi slave "labour" camp)(1942)

Q: You left at 6:00 in the morning and arrived at 6:00 at night ... You were 12 hours on the train?

Q: Go back to the train ride: what was the train ride like?

Q: But you knew otherwise?

Q: You mention this quite a bit ... your suitcase . . .

Q: How important was that suitcase, because you mentioned it quite a bit?

Q: Let's take a step back before we move onto the other camps. Your father left with you ... but he managed ... he said he had stomach pains? abdominal cramps?

Q: And you were 17?

Q: Do you remember the last moments you had with him, because you never saw him again . .? What did you say to him? What did he say to you?

Q: Now, your father nearly "made it", didn't he?

Scene Selection 7:September, 1942: Deportation from slave labour camp in France - Dieppe bombings - to Auschwitz Extermination Camp

Q: Let's go back to September 1942: Dieppe ... you heard the bombing?

Q: So how long had you been there, up to this point?

Q: So you figured, they had taken three months of your life ... (August-October, 1942) but if this was the worst . . .

Q: And so you packed your suitcase one more time?

Q: So you thought you were going (back) to Belgium?

Scene Selection 8:Arrival in Auschwitz Extermination Camp (Fall 1942)

Q: And how long was this train ride?

Q: Four days on a train ... one loaf of bread?

Q: Did they ask?

Q: Did they ask you (your "trade")?

Q: Up until that time, how much death had you seen?

Q: So within half an hour ... of being at Auschwitz . . .

Q: Now, there were lines that got formed after you got outside . . .

Q: You say, "some" Wouldn't "most"?

Scene Selection 9:Auschwitz Extermination Camp: October 1942 – August 1943

Q: When were you aware, David, about the chimneys, and what was going on?

Q: When did you think ... it's a horrible question to ask you, but I've got to ask it.
... when did you realize that your sisters and your mother had the same
outcome ... ?

Scene Selection 10: 72585

Q: "72585" ... ?

Q: How long were you in Auschwitz before you ended up in the Warsaw
Ghetto?

Scene Selection 11: "Life" in Auschwitz Extermination Camp

Q: This is an impossible thing for you to answer, but give me an "average day"...
in Auschwitz... what "typically" happened?

Q: Did you think about it (suicide) often?

Q: You know, you hear the saying, "You live life one day, one day at a time."
What did that mean to you in Auschwitz?

Q: How often did that happen (i.e.: deaths during the night)?

Q: Was there any ... camaraderie?

Q: When you got to the bunks at night, what did you talk about?

Scene Selection 12: August 1944: The Death Marches

Q: 1944: Your first Death March: Tell me about that...

Q: During that first day, what was on your mind: What were you thinking about?

Q: Did anybody see you while you were walking?

Q: So this was just pointless ... marching ...

Q: How long did this go on for?

Scene Selection 13: August 1944: Deportation to Dachau Concentration Camp: (120 per cattle car)

Q: Where was this?

Q: And when was this now? What month and year are we in?

Q: Now at this time – you didn't realize that it would be another nine months until you were going to get liberated. Had you realized that you had another nine months, do you think you could you have made it that far?

Q: How long did this train ride go on for?

Q: I am trying to imagine this – you're standing in the middle of the train – squeezed between three or four people; you had no idea if any of those had died around you?

Q: So during the day now, could you start seeing each other?

Q: Was there any conversation?

Q: And you end up in Dachau?

Scene Selection 14: August 1944 – 29 April 1945: Dachau Concentration Camp to Liberation (on David's 20th birthday)

Q: Now you were in Dachau for how long?

Q: Describe for me Dachau for nine months ...

Q: You went to Landsberg, right?

Q: Now we've got to take a step back because you're telling us this as an elderly gentleman right now, but you were 17 at the time?

Q: Your "job"? You end up laying steel rails? cleaning snow?

Q: So you seem to have experienced a lot of these "miracles" ... because you had the situation where people were getting shot all around you in the lake; and people dying all around you in the train... and now this. ...

Q: Now you saw this woman again, though ...

Q: Who did this man turn out to be?

Q: Let's jump ahead to a month before you were liberated ... do you remember a month, a week before – what was going on at that time – before liberation?

Scene Selection 15: Liberation to "rebirth": 27 to 29 April 1945 (David Shentow's 20th birthday)

Q: And it was the last day?

Q: You're missing hearing in one ear as a result ... ?

Q: And your birthday was ... is ... ?

Scene Selection 16: Interview – Part 2: Further Reflections on the Holocaust, by David Shentow, Prisoner of the Nazi Holocaust, Number 72585 (Interview begun on 17 December 2006)

Q: So, we're in the second day of Chanukah now (2006-12-17), and maybe it's fitting that we're talking about the Holocaust: there is a saying in the Talmud, that once the Messiah comes, there will be only two holidays that we will continue to celebrate: one is Chanukah, which celebrates that we were able to continue spiritually because the Assyrian Greeks tried to stop Jewish traditions, like the Sabbath, circumcision, and the beginning of the new month; and Purim, which was the annihilation of the Jews. And in many ways, the Holocaust is a kind of combination of the two of them. There was a sort of a spiritual and annihilation of the Jewish people: . . .

Q: Did you ever participate in a "Minyan"?

Q: Let me read you something... This was written by Charlotte Delbo (French writer) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte_Delbo) – quote: I have spoken with death, and so I know the futility of things we learn, the discovery I made at the cost of a suffering so intense, I keep on wondering whether it was worth it. How do you get out of that whole experience that was "worth it", and ... if you have recovered, what is it that you can say, "I can take out of it, and add to the world"?

Q: Let me read you something else. This is from Albert Camus. And he says, there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is worth living, amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. And you know what I derive from that, when somebody considers ending their life, if it were so simple ... there must be something in the past that keeps you going ... there must be something that kept you going . . .

Q: I'm just going to mention some words; what I'd like you to do, is tell me the first thing that comes to your mind: "Trains" . . .

Q: "Family"? . . .

Q: "Revenge"? ...

Q: "Evil"? ...

Q: There is a question that always comes up with philosophers: it's one that may derived from the philosopher Nietzsche, around 1900: I should tell you something I saw in a bathroom, once: it said, "God is dead ..." Nietzsche; and underneath it, it said, "Nietzsche is dead" ... "God" ... So let me ask you, "where was God to you in the Holocaust"?

Q: If you could sum up Auschwitz in a couple of words, what would you say?

Q: One of the reasons you're even talking to me... you told me (... and not specifically to me...) was because of the (Holocaust) deniers. What do you say, you know (right now there is a conference going on in Iran, of Holocaust deniers) ... What's your message to those who would even consider to believe what the deniers are saying?

Q: So let me ask you the culminating question. If you live another 40-some odd years ... if you were the last survivor ... who witnessed Auschwitz and the concentration camps... what would be your message?

Scene Selection 17: Text of "Post-Script: Shentow Life Post-Holocaust"

Following World War II and the Holocaust, David Shentow was eventually united with his only surviving relative ... an uncle in Belgium.

Weighing less than 90 pounds, David gradually recovered and eventually made his way to Canada.

He later met Rose (Toronto; August 1949), who would become his wife and the mother of their two daughters.

Together, to the present day, David, with Rose at his side, offers living testimony to classrooms of students, and at conferences, as a surviving, living witness of the personal horrors of the Nazi Holocaust against Jewish people.

Please continue to serve David's legacy. Serve as a "witness" in your own right, and continue to transmit this narrative.

One lesson of the Holocaust is that we are all responsible for staying informed about what is going on in the community and in the world around us.

We are each responsible for caring about, and acting for the well-being of others, as well as for being an agent of positive social change.

Scene Selection 18: Text of "Tribute, Credits and References"

We recall with reverence and honor all those of our families who perished in the Holocaust. This film is dedicated to their memories and to the six million, to the Righteous among nations, to those who survived and mustered the courage and fortitude to carry on for future generations.

This film is also dedicated to those who teach, and learn about the Holocaust; to those who battle the ongoing scourge of anti-Semitism today; to all those who are the beacons of light and hope in a still troubled world...

- 2011 -

CREDITS

Interviewed: David Shentow
Writer, Interviewer: David P. Hoffman
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David P. Hoffman
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Composer, "Sophia's Waltz": Floralove Katz
Vocalist, Cellist, Pianist, Music Editor: Floralove Katz
Shentow Family Photos: Rose-David Shentow
Photo of David Shentow: Floralove Katz

IMAGES OF THE HOLOCAUST

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Photo of Raoul Gustav Wallenberg: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raoul_Wallenberg

Photo of Giorgiu Perlasca:

www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://voiceseducation.org/sites/default/files/images/giorgio_perlasca

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TRAIN WHISTLE SOUND

<http://www.6060.org/links/Links.aspx>

Biographical Notes: David Shentow, Prisoner of the Nazi Holocaust, Number 72585

David Shentow was born **Dydja Krzetowski**, (the medieval Polish version of David Shem Tov, i.e., David "Good Name") in Warsaw, Poland, 29 April, 1925. His family moved to Antwerp, Belgium when he was six weeks old.

In 1942, he was deported with his father to Dannes-Camiers, a Nazi slave labour camp near Dieppe, France. There, he encountered boys and men from his home town that he couldn't recognize only six weeks after they had disappeared! They were already emaciated, haggard, and covered with lice, bruises, and wounds from beatings.

Following the Dieppe bombings (September, 1942), David was deported from France back to Malines, Belgium, where another train – filled with women, children and elderly people - was linked to his. They were sent to Auschwitz Extermination Camp (Oświęcim, Poland), arriving four days later.

On arrival at Auschwitz, hundreds of men were immediately lined up, five abreast, on one side of the platform; women, children, sick and elderly people, on the other. Shentow came face to face with the notorious Dr. Josef Mengele, seated at a table. A single flick of Mengele's finger dictated the fate of each prisoner: those sent to the left – including women, children, sick and elderly - went straight to the gas chambers and crematoria!

Between autumn 1943 and late April 1945, the Nazis forced tens of thousands of starving prisoners from concentration and extermination camps, on agonizing daily, "death marches" of many dozens of miles, to conceal from the advancing Allied troupes, the extent of their Holocaust atrocities. In August 1943, David was one of 4,500 prisoners forced on a 30-kilometres-a-day death march from Warsaw to Kutno, Poland.

Survivors of Shentow's Death March were forced into train cattle cars in Kutno, eventually arriving in Dachau, Germany. David was one of 120 prisoners per car, jammed in for another, horrifying, five-day ordeal: no water, no food, no light, no ventilation, no toilet facilities, no sense of where they were going, what fate awaited them, nor how long they would be trapped in that prison box. They were so crowded that many died actually standing up, with their eyes wide open.

On 29 April, 1945, David was liberated in Dachau, by American troops. It was his 20th birthday.

Following arduous weeks of recovery, David was able to return to Antwerp. He would soon learn that he was the sole survivor of his immediate family.

Four years later, David came to Canada, on *H.M.S. Samaria*, landing at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia (around March 27, 1949). He became a Canadian citizen in spring, 1954.

David has been married to wife, Rose, for more than 60 years and has two children and two

grandchildren.

In the late 1970s, Shentow began to offer living testimony as a first-hand witness of the Nazi atrocities against Jewish people, in response to the growing numbers of Holocaust deniers that began only 30 years after the War. Over two decades, Shentow, accompanied by Rose, has spoken to dozens of high school and university classes, to police services, organizations, and at conferences.

On 19 May, 2011, the Premier of Ontario joined the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem at Queen's Park, to honor 19 Holocaust survivors and their contributions to the Province: among the honorees was **David Shentow**.

Read "March of the Living: Testimony by David Shentow at
http://www.marchoftheliving.com/mol2004_update/survivors/survivors_shentow.html

1. Film-Interview

i. Background about the Film-Interview: David Shentow, Prisoner of the Nazi Holocaust, Number 72585

From the 1970s, in response to the growing tide of Holocaust denial that began less than 30 years after World War II, David Shentow, began to offer testimony as a living witness of the Nazi atrocities against Jewish people. Over three decades, Shentow, accompanied by his wife Rose, has spoken to dozens of high school and university classes, to police services, organizations, and at conferences.

ii. Goals of this Film-Interview include:

- a. to extend David Shentow's voice and messages, along with those of other survivors and educators, into the decades ahead;
- b. to supplement Shentow's presentations to schools and organizations;
- c. to reach greater numbers of diverse audiences;
- d. to serve as a new educational piece, to refute Holocaust denial, and to support (anti-) racism, and genocide studies;
- e. to motivate Holocaust committees, funding agencies and others to prepare similar films or testimonies of every survivor;

i. Interviewer: David P. Hoffman

Long committed to Holocaust education, Hoffman had contemplated developing a film to juxtapose the "traditional black-and-white" dark images associated with the Holocaust, with colourful (sports, arts, film and other) events that took place concurrently around the world during WWII. At a propitious meeting with David Shentow, David P. Hoffman broached the proposal of a film-interview, and subsequently arranged filming, wrote questions based on Shentow's "March of the Living" testimony, and interviewed Shentow six times, over a three-month period in 2006.

ii. Director, Writer, Narrator, Editor, Composer, Musician: Floralove Katz

Over decades of music performance, writing and community outreach, Katz remains dedicated to Jewish, interfaith and Holocaust education as a deep, personal tribute to loved ones, to the six million, to every survivor, and as a key tool to deter racism, torment and genocide to the present day.

Over ten months Katz edited over six hours of raw material, arranged it by scene selections, added ticker tape, chapter notes and photos; composed "Sophia's Waltz" - the leitmotif, recorded and edited herself on 12 separate tracks (of vocals, cello and piano harmonies). She wrote and produced the Teaching Kit folders.

2. Teaching Notes:

The film-interview is divided into 18 Scene Selections (identified by “Chapter Markers” (see Kit Document 3: Interview Questions: Photo Credits).

The “Introduction” (Scene Selection 2) situates David Shentow’s personal experiences in the context of the Holocaust in particular, and genocides in general.

The longer segment, “Part I” (Scene Selections 1–15), traces Shentow’s personal experiences from 1942-1945. Scene Selections are divided chronologically and flow sequentially through the latter three years of WWII and the Holocaust, when David Shentow was deported from Belgium to France, then to Poland (Auschwitz, Warsaw and Dachau).

The shorter segment, “Part II” (Scene Selection 16), addresses philosophical questions beginning with quotes from, and references to the writings of Charlotte Delbo and Albert Camus. Shentow reflects on such issues as the importance of “family”; “revenge”; and “evil”.

The Post-Script (Scene Selection 17) traces David Shentow’s life from pre- to post-Holocaust, through family photos.

Photographs throughout the Film-Interview are included to illuminate and inform David Shentow’s personal testimony. Some of Shentow’s narrative and some images may be sensitive or painful for audience members. It is recommended that pedagogues and presenters review the material in advance of screening (notably Scene Selections 8–16), to consider how best to prepare each audience.

The Film-Interview is appropriate for, and might be presented in the context of discussion regarding racism and genocide in general, anti-Semitism through the ages, and the Holocaust in particular. Audience members will benefit from facts and historical context in advance of the screening.

The “Introduction” of the Film-Interview is useful in this regard. It covers key points that might be elaborated and discussed:

- The Holocaust genocide against Jewish people was organized by the Nazis concurrent with their planning for, and invasion of Europe and beyond;
- What makes the Holocaust so singular a genocide is not only the magnitude of the killing process, but the very institutionalization of anti-Semitism, and the intricate procedures for the alienation and murders of Jewish civilians;
- These procedures involved the state government, the military, the police, the Church, right down to community, charity and children’s organizations;
- Tragically, there have been other genocides. Some – like Rwanda and Darfur – could have been prevented based on knowledge gained from the Holocaust; the lessons of history must be learned and applied;
- Of the six million Jewish people murdered by the Nazis, over 1 million were babies and children;

- Jewish people were not the only ones targeted for murder: another 5.5 million “enemies of the German State” included gay men and women, mentally and physically disabled people, Jehovah’s Witnesses, trade unionists, Communists, Socialists, Rom (Gypsy people).

Because the Film-Interview runs over two hours, pedagogues and presenters may wish to divide the screening into two or more sessions (based on Scene Selections)(see Kit Document 3: Interview Questions: Photo Credits).

They may wish to assign different scene selections to particular class or audience members, to stimulate discussion, or to have groups prepare questions in advance.

There are numerous resources (books, magazines, films) including (legitimate) Holocaust web-sites. Audiences including students should be cautioned to distinguish between these and those numerous web-sites, books and resources that deny the Holocaust ever having taken place, or significantly challenge the facts so carefully documented by the Nazis themselves - including the actual number of six million, murdered, Jewish people.

Students and audience members may wish to explore:

- March of the Living, David Shentow’s personal testimony
 - http://www.marchoftheliving.com/mol2004_update/survivors/survivors_shentow.html
- Steven Spielberg Shoah Project
 - http://www.google.ca/#q=steven+spielberg%27s+shoah+project&hl=en&prmd=ivnso&source=univ&tbm=vid&tbo=u&sa=X&ei=hq_nTZ2MEdKEtgfbycS6Cg&ved=0CG8QqwQ&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.&fp=91b4c683321d9b4b&biw=1085&bih=609
- Holocaust History Museum Yad Vashem (see “Research” tab)
 - <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/overview.asp>
- Montreal Institute of Genocide Studies
 - <http://migs.concordia.ca/>
- Institut canadien pour l’éducation sur les génocides
 - www.educationgenocide.ca
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
 - <http://www.ushmm.org/>
- Canadian Museum for Human Rights / Le Musée canadien pour les droits de la personne
 - <http://humanrightsmuseum.ca/>
- The Polish Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada
 - <http://www.pjhftoronto.ca/>

3. Reviews of the Film-Interview

"Words are not enough to express our feelings of profound appreciation and admiration for your work with regard to your efforts to educate Canadians, instructors and their students, about the very real threats to our Canadian freedoms, caused by racism in general and anti-Semitism in particular." R.S.

"I am struck by, and grateful for the detail of your film. . . the testimony, the historical setting . . . very well done." E.B.

"I appreciated the assiduous incorporation of photos and the leitmotif of the music throughout: Sophia's Waltz is very evocative." R.K.

"I am moved by and grateful for David Shentow's courage." B.S.

"This is a powerful piece of cinema. I sat riveted throughout. I don't know by what right I even got to sit in the same room as David Shentow, but he teaches us all an invaluable lesson about striving for and cherishing life, and working for our common good." P.D.

"The Introduction is masterfully put together, the study context is very useful. . . not too long . . . not too short. Having the Scene Selections and every question printed and readily available to pedagogues is excellent. It allows teachers and students to know what to anticipate. We are used to films as a form of entertainment. But this Film-Interview is an excellent learning tool: the chronological order sequencing of events (Scene Selections) as they unfolded in David Shentow's life makes this Film-Interview easy to follow and to learn from in the context of the Holocaust and WWII. The Post-Script is excellent. It is a very powerful video." N.S.

"This film-interview is so evocative, so visceral. From a pedagogical point of view, it has multiple applications. The Scene Selections will allow educators and Facilitators to present various sections at different times, or allow students and participants to write about, or prepare questions relative to different events." M.L.

"I was deeply moved by the film as a composite. It juxtaposes the individual story against the larger setting of humanity (or the lack thereof), during the Holocaust." M.H.

"This film captures the testimony of a courageous individual – David Shentow - who survived every hell through sheer dint of will. . . who remarkably, never lost his humanity, his humour, his graciousness, compassion, or even his capacity to see every person as a human being - even those who tormented him." F.K.